Sport, Religion, Faith and Spirituality: An Annotated Bibliography

**Winning the Race? Religion, Hope, and Reshaping the Sport Enhancement Debate**
by Tracy Trothen
Mercer University Press - 2015

The ethics debate about the use of enhancements in elite sport is becoming increasingly complex. Yet we are not asking what relevance sports' religious dimension has to this debate. Through an examination of literature on the relationship between sport, religion and spirituality, hope emerges as a compelling feature of sport and a significant part of what makes sport meaningful. Trothen explores four main locations of hope in sport: winning, losing, and anticipation; star athletes; perfect moments; and relational embodiment, and examines how these locations intersect with the enhancement debate. Using Christian theological reflection to problematize the four main approaches to the ethical question of enhancement use in elite sport, and the underlying values informing these approaches.

**A Brief Theology of Sport**
by Lincoln Harvey
Cascade Books - 2014

Sport is extremely popular. This groundbreaking book explains why. It shows that sport has everything to do with our deepest identity. It is where we resonate with the most basic nature of reality.

'A Brief Theology of Sport' sweeps across the fields of church history, philosophy, and Christian doctrine to draw readers into a creative vision of sport. The book begins by examining how the church has historically approached sport before turning to consider sport on the basis of the divine act of creation. In doing so, Harvey is able to distinguish sport from all other human activities by identifying it as a set-aside sphere in which the unnecessary-but-meaningful nature of life is celebrated. Harvey’s constructive proposal sheds light on a wide range of issues, including the role of competition, professionalization, and celebrity culture in sport today. As such, 'A Brief Theology of Sport' makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the value of sport to human life. Lincoln Harvey is Lecturer in Systematic Theology at St Mellitus College, London.

**The Games People Play: Theology, Religion, and Sport**
by Robert Ellis
Wipf & Stock - 2014

In *The Games People Play*, Robert Ellis constructs a theology around the global cultural phenomenon of modern sport, paying particular attention to its British and American manifestations. Using historical narrative and social analysis to enter the debate on sport as religion, Ellis shows that modern sport may be said to have taken on some of the functions previously vested in organized religion. Through biblical and theological reflection, he presents a practical theology of sport’s appeal and value, with special attention to the theological concept of transcendence.

Throughout, he draws on original empirical work with sports participants and spectators. The Games People Play addresses issues often considered problematic in theological discussions of sport such as
gender, race, consumerism, and the role of the modern media, as well as problems associated with excessive competition and performance-enhancing substances.

As Ellis explains, "Sporting journalists often use religious language in covering sports events. Salvation features in many a headline, and talk of moments of redemption is not uncommon. Perhaps, somewhere beyond the clichéd hyperbole, there is some theological truth in all this after all." Robert Ellis is Principal of Regent's Park College, Oxford, and a member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion in the University of Oxford.

**Religion and Sports in American Culture**  
Jeffrey Scholes and Raphael Sassower  
Routledge - 2013

Religion and Sports in American Culture explores the relationship between religion and modern sports in America. Whether found in the religious purpose of ancient Olympic Games, in curses believed to plague the Chicago Cubs, or in the figure of Tim Tebow, religion and sports have been and are still tightly intertwined. While there is widespread suspicion that sports are slowly encroaching on the territory historically occupied by religion, Scholes and Sassower assert that sports are not replacing religion and that neither is sports a religion. Instead, the authors look at the relationship between sports and religion in America from a post-secular perspective that looks at both discourses as a part of the same cultural web. In this way each institution is able to maintain its own integrity, legitimacy, and unique expression of cultural values as they relate to each other. Utilizing important themes that intersect both religion and sports, Scholes and Sassower illuminate the complex and often publicly contentious relationship between the two.

Appropriate for both classroom use and for the interested non-specialist, Religion and Sports in American Culture brings pilgrimage, sacrifice, relics, and redemption together in an unexpected cultural continuity.

**Good Game: Christianity and the Culture of Sports**  
by Shirl James Hoffman  
Baylor University Press - 2010

Here, in this thoughtful, narrative-driven exploration, Hoffman retells numerous fascinating stories from the world of ancient and contemporary sports and draws on the history of the Christian tradition as he seeks to answer the question "What would it mean to think Christianly.

**Sports Theology: Finding God’s Winning Spirit**  
by Greg S. Smith  
Dog Ear Publishing - 2010

Sports Theology: Playing Inside Out, proposes that the highest level of athletic or personal performance is achieved by utilizing our God-given gifts. Although it is true that athletes can benefit from psychological and physical techniques, athletic potential is grounded in the original athleticism they are given by God. God encourages us to develop and maximize the gifts he has given us. Performance then is related to one's ability to understand, develop and act on these gifts.
Sports theology does not conflict with, nor disregard, sports psychology, but rather sees sports theology as being more primary. Christianity holds that man is made in the image of God, which is our original state of perfection and is the foundation upon which all things fall. It is in relationship to this original condition that we can be all that we can be. Greg Smith M.Div., LPC is a licensed professional counselor and has a Masters Degree in Theology. Over the last thirty years Greg has been immersed in the field of psychiatry as a therapist, clinical director and administrator.

*Fair Play: The Ethics of Sport* (3rd Edition)
by Robert L. Simon
Westview Press - 2010

Addressing both collegiate and professional sports, the updated edition of *Fair Play explores the ethical* presuppositions of competitive athletics and their connection both to ethical theory and to concrete moral dilemmas that arise in actual athletic competition. Other new material covers the analysis of sports and games according to influential philosopher Bernard Suits; the morality of cheating and the ethics of strategic fouling; and the impact of performance-enhancing drugs on the legitimacy of records. In addition, Simon provides enhanced considerations of the morality of competition in sports, the ethical aspects of violence in sports, and the arguments in defense of intercollegiate sports.

*True Competition: Guide to Pursuing Excellence in Sport & Society*
by David Shields
Human Kinetics Publishers - 2009

Shields offers a blueprint for maximizing the potential of competition to foster excellence and enjoyment. He provides a novel perspective on competition that challenges traditional beliefs through a research-backed defense that —up until now— has been lacking. With this text, readers will learn the differences between positive and negative competition, and they will discover how to implement change in their organizations, teams, and individual practices.

*Sport in Contemporary Society: An Anthology* (8th Edition)
by D. Stanley Eitzen
Paradigm Publishers - 2009

Sports buffs know all about famous players and coaches and can recite statistics in endless detail. But do fans know how sport is linked to other institutions of society? Do they understand the role of sport in socializing youngsters in both positive and negative ways? Do they know that racism continues in sport? What about the ways in which sport perpetuates gender-role stereotypes in society? How do owners, coaches, and other sport authorities exercise power to maintain control over athletes?

These issues and more are examined in this selection of accessible writings by journalists and scholars who represent a new era of critical appraisal of sports—both professional and amateur. The essays transcend many prevalent stereotypes and myths; they also yield fascinating and important insights into the nature of society. Twenty-one articles presented here are new to the eighth edition, reflecting the latest trends and analysis. This edition is essential reading in courses on sociology of sport and on the foundations of physical education.

D. Stanley Eitzen, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Colorado State University. Although he is well known for his scholarship on homelessness, poverty, social inequality, power, family, and criminology,
he is best known for his contributions to the sociology of sport. In 1996, he was selected to be a Sports Ethics Fellow at the Institute for International Sport.

*The Reason for Sports: A Christian Fanifesto*
by Ted A. Kluck
Moody Publishers - 2009

This book is for the avid sports fan who loves Jesus. Let’s face it: Sports—with the scandals, cheating, arrogance, and more that often accompany them—are complicated to watch. How should Christian sports fans enjoy the good in the game amidst all the bad?

There are books on how to worship God with our marriages, our money, and our sex lives. Books on how to “think biblically” about movies, television, and the arts. Books on how to vote and how not to vote as a Christian. But there is little thoughtful, Christ-centered writing on the subject that drives most of men’s banter with each other and consumes the bulk of their free time: sports.

Author Ted Kluck understands these complications with being a Christian sports fan—and a Christian athlete. He played professional indoor football, coached high school football, and trained as a professional wrestler.

He knows how to write well about sports because of these experiences and also because he watches them (dedicatedly), and has written about them. Ted’s award-winning writing has appeared in *ESPN The Magazine, Sports Spectrum* magazine, and on ESPN.com’s Page 2.

Written in the vein of Rick Reilly (Sports Illustrated), Chuck Klosterman (*Spin, Esquire*), and David Foster Wallace (*A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again*), *The Reason for Sports* will both entertain and shed light on some of today’s most pertinent sports issues (race, drugs, hero worship, and more) all through a biblical lens.

by Jay Coakley
McGraw-Hill Education - 2008

Jay Coakley is Professor of Sociology at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs. He received his Ph.D and M.A. from the University of Notre Dame in Sociology and received his B.A. from Regis College (Denver). He is published in a wide range of journals and has edited several books including the *Handbook of Sports Studies* with Eric Dunning and given many presentations around the world. He has served on the editorial board for the *Sociology of Sport Journal* where he was editor for many years. He is currently on the editorial board of the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*

by D. Stanley Eitzen and George H. Sage
Paradigm Publishers - 2008

The book that set the standard for sports textbooks has been extensively revised and updated for its new eighth edition. Among the many new topical additions are elite child athletics, gambling in college sports, performance enhancement drugs, sport and nationalism after 9/11, the power of media in sport, and more on minorities and on disabilities in sport.
The authors are experienced text authors as well as former athletes and coaches. They bring a unique perspective to topics that are current and much on the minds of students and professors.

*Game Day for the Glory of God: A Guide for Athletes, Fans, and Wannabes*
by Stephen Altrogge
Crossway Publishing - 2008

This book gives biblical guidance on playing, watching, and discussing sports in a God-glorifying manner, helping believers grow in both their love for God and their passion for holiness.

Scripture calls Christians to do everything for the glory of God. That means every thought, every word, and every deed are to be done in a way that brings pleasure and honor to him. Believe it or not, this includes playing, watching, and talking sports! But most of us fail to recognize how sports fit into the big picture of a God-glorifying life, unable to imagine that the God who created the universe might actually care about Little League games and Monday Night Football.

So how do we play, watch, and talk sports for God's glory? *Game Day for the Glory of God* seeks to answer that question from a biblical perspective. Sports fan Stephen Altrogge aims to help readers enjoy sports as a gift from God and to see sports as a means of growing in godliness.

*Sport and Spirituality: An Introduction*
by Jim Parry, Simon Robinson, Nick Watson and Mark Nesti
Routledge - 2007

Sport science can quantify many aspects of human performance but the spiritual dimensions of sports experience cannot be fully understood through measurement. However, the spiritual experience of sport – be it described as ‘flow’, ‘transcendence’ or the discovery of meaning and value – is central both to our basic motivation to take part in sports, and to achieving success. *Sport and Spirituality: An Introduction* explores these human aspects of sports experience through the perspectives of sport psychology, philosophy, ethics, theology and religious studies.

This groundbreaking text will be a valuable resource for students of sport and exercise studies, sports coaching, physical education and sport and health psychology. This book should be read by all those interested in the preparation, performance and well-being of athletes.

*Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport*
by William J. Baker
Harvard University Press - 2007

The spectacle of modern sport displays all the latest commercial and technological innovations, yet age-old religious concerns still thrive at the stadium. Coaches lead pre-game and post-game prayers, athletes give God the credit for home runs and touchdowns, and fans wave signs with biblical quotations and allusions. Like no other nation on earth, Americans eagerly blend their religion and sports. *Playing with God* traces this dynamic relationship from the Puritan condemnation of games as sinful in the seventeenth century to the near deification of athletic contests in our own day.

Early religious opposition gradually gave way to acceptance when "wholesome recreation" for young men in crowded cities and soldiers in faraway fields became a national priority. Protestants led in the readjustment of attitudes toward sport; Catholics, Jews, Mormons, and Muslims followed. The Irish at
Notre Dame, outstanding Jews in baseball, Black Muslims in the boxing ring, and born-again athletes at Liberty University represent the numerous negotiations and compromises producing the unique American mixture of religion and sport.

*Sport, Play, and Ethical Reflection*

by Randolph Feezell

University of Illinois Press - 2006

Randolph Feezell's *Sport, Play, and Ethical Reflection* immediately tackles two big questions about sport: "What is it?" and "Why does it attract so many people?" He argues that sports participation is best described as a form of human play, and the attraction for participants and viewers alike derives from both its aesthetic richness and narrative structure. He then claims that the way in which sports encourage serious competition in trivial pursuits is fundamentally absurd, and therefore participation requires a state of irony in the participants, where seriousness and playfulness are combined.

Feezell builds on these conclusions, addressing important ethical issues, arguing that sportsmanship should be seen as a kind of Aristotelian mean between the extremes of over and under investment in sport. Chapters on cheating, running up the score, and character-building stress sport as a rule-governed, tradition-bound practice with standards of excellence and goods internal to the practice. With clear writing and numerous illuminating examples, Feezell demonstrates deep insight into both of his subjects.

Descriptions used in this bibliography are adapted from Amazon Books.

To make a recommendation for additions to this list, contact christopher.janosik@villanova.edu.